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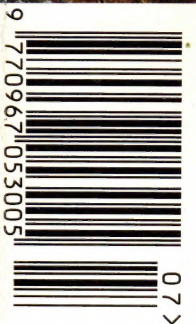
PREMIERE

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It's Got Legs!

EXCLUSIVE

Steven Spielberg on the set of
the epic Jurassic Park



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Something

WICKED

This Way
Comes

Welcome to Stage 27 of Universal Studios, where fear is the key. Jurassic Park's in-your-face special effects and gory story promises to be the stuff of which summer nightmares (and box office dreams) will be made. As Steven Spielberg prepares to wrap, Fred Schruers speaks to him of "Rainy birds", raptors and "residual wooga-wooga".





THE T. REX
REVIVAL STARTS
HERE.
AWESOMELY
TOOTHY EFFECTS
ON THE SET OF
JURASSIC PARK

I THINK THEY ALL LIKED IT," SAYS STEVEN Spielberg, savouring his reviews as he plunges his golf cart down a tarmac gully on the Universal Studios lot. "Yeah," he adds thoughtfully, letting a small smile of satisfaction show.

His creation has gone down well, but in retrospect, is there anything about it he would change?

Now he purses his lips, pondering. "Well," he finally says, "more pepper?"

Spielberg's subject is the heaping skillet of matzoh brei he's just cooked in the Amblin compound's kitchen and fed to his key team of fellow film-makers down the alley from the *Jurassic Park* set. As he skips off the golf cart and through the door to Stage 27, he doesn't add any comments on his guests' reaction to the main luncheon fare – a half-hour of screened *Jurassic* footage. But at least part of his good humour may be derived from those rushes. The picture at this stage is on track to finish well ahead of schedule (twelve days early, as it turns out), the budget has stayed lean, and the dinosaurs – like the one he now ducks under – have been coming up happily believable.

In fact, the velociraptor he's just passed under, for all its predatory claws and teeth, doesn't stand much taller than a human. This particular one is hoisted, strung from twin rails, so it can hop fleetingly across the foreground of the frame, while a character called Nedry gets in a different sort of jeopardy beyond. "In *Jurassic Park*, there's good dinosaurs and bad dinosaurs," says Spielberg as he stalks through simulated jungle brush to find a camera position. "Really there are no bad dinosaurs, just animals who are following the food chain to their own survival. So these 'raptors are what you might consider the most dangerous of the dinosaurs. But then you've got triceratops (the stubby, brown-mantled rhino seen lying ill in the movie), you've got brachiosaurus (the massive, swan-necked herbivore), you've got gallimimus (giraffe-scale, ostrich-like herd animals who gallop over and among the film's humans at one stage). You've even got the baby 'raptor who, when first hatched, is kind of beautiful and sweet. So it's not just chase and be chased, there are some very nice interludes and pastoral moments amidst all the chaos."

Still, one keeps a primitive man's wary eye on the 'raptor, a mixture of dreadfully strong bulk in the hindquarters and almost pterodactyl-style sharp edges around jaw and forelegs. It looks deadly merely hanging there. By the time two such creatures start stalking humans inside the park's command

centre, you can practically smell carnage on their breath, and the film's children are frantically fleeing a toothy death that would be delivered with no shred of remorse.

"I'm not evoking that energy by the use of blood or a lot of on-camera violence; I'm walking the tightrope between PG-13 and R and I wanted this to be a general audience entertainment and not just an adult film, but I wouldn't advise anybody under 13 to see the movie unless they have seen fun, scary movies and they're used to the genre.

"I think this movie is really scary," admits the director, "and I think it's really violent. But I've been careful in choosing the methods I use to kill off some of our leading characters. You can get a lot of rises out of the audience without resorting to spurting blood and entrails greasing the jungle."

Shades of a massive, grey marine creature that was nicknamed Bruce?

"This isn't a step in a completely original direction. It's more of a vintage film for me. But I love the genre and I haven't done any like it since *Jaws*. So it was a big kick for me to get back into it.

"I just opened up my tool-box, took every tool I've ever used in my entire career and employed them all. That's why while I say it might be nothing new in my body of work, I do use every trick I've ever used and then some."

The tool-box known as Stage 27 is thoroughly crammed today. The jungle Spielberg stands in must be half an acre of dense greenery, much of it actual plants. To the vast soundstage's rear is effects wizard Stan

Winston's on-set workshop, a row of lizard-skinned dinosaurs (some broken down into parts, most of them rigged with skeins of cable). Catwalks lead to an entire carpentry shop staying busy in one corner, and an artificial slope of rock and mud supports a *Jurassic Park*-logoed jeep that's stuck in a culvert after running off the road. "Rainy birds" – long movable pipes tethered overhead, stand ready to make rain, and even as Spielberg is handed a yellow oilskin to repel the soon-to-be-cued downpour, he wants to hear the "thunder" – triggered from an electronic box and matched by flickers of lightning.

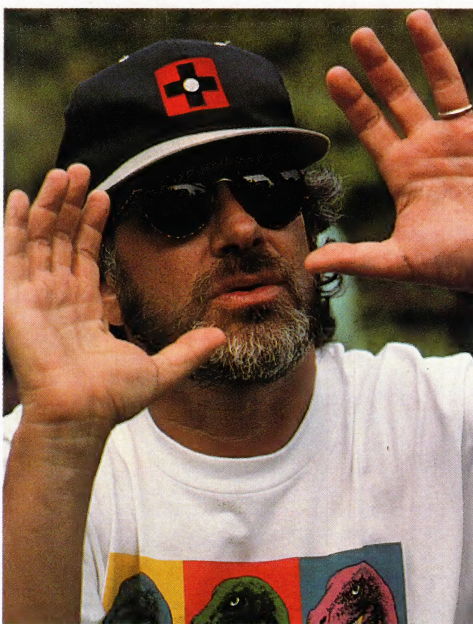
"From the get-go, I wanted most of the movie to be in a tropical storm," says the director. "I always wanted to be on soundstages under very controlled circumstances. It would have been impractical to shoot the whole movie on location." Witness the near disaster that hit the production during their initial stint in Hawaii, when tropical storm Iniki roared in, paralysing the island. Though quick re-jigging by long-time associate and co-producer Kathleen Kennedy meant the tempest only cost the shoot one day, it was ironic that real life should replicate the natural chaos that Michael Crichton had written into his novel.

Wearing his own yellow oilskin is actor Wayne Knight. Faintly familiar as the rotund square-headed cop who tried to make Sharon Stone quit smoking in the infamous *Basic Instinct* interrogation scene, Knight was the first person Spielberg cast. As Nedry, the computer hacker who triggers mayhem by shutting down the park's systems so he can escape with precious vials of dinosaur DNA, he represents foolhardy greed, "in love with himself and money, which leads to his undoing. He's sort of our loose cannon, Nedry, who proves the chaos theory to be correct".

Nedry's "undoing" is imminent in the scene Spielberg now sets, as the panting hacker runs from his jeep's winch to a nearby tree with a length of cable. Even as he loops the cable about a tree, a baby "spitter" (dilophosaurus) looks at him curiously.

"He immobilises you with venomous spit right to your eye," says Spielberg, "and then he eats you at his leisure." But Nedry, untuned to nature and even the park's species, is "just trying to make it go away . . . he sort of treats it like a dog, throws it a stick".

In the quick inter-cutting that takes over the film at this stage ("I guess we're sort of blasting right through to the end of the second act"), Nedry's comical mutterings ("okay, okay . . . gotta go now . . .") make him all the more doomed. But at this moment,



"I do use every trick I've ev



SAM NEILL,
FLANKED BY
JOSEPH
MAZZELLO AND
ARIANA
RICHARDS
AWAITS HIS
FATE

Spielberg is unhappy with the almost whimsical head-bobbings of the spitter.

"Can we get the 'wooga-wooga' a little more natural?" Spielberg asks Stan Winston, who puts the same question to the operator pulling cables in the pit. Though the deceptively cute creature makes credible swoops left and right to peer around a tree trunk, Spielberg notices "a residual wooga-wooga, which an animal with good muscular neck control wouldn't have.

"He's no bigger than E.T., who was relatively simple to operate, and we cabled E.T. That technology has certainly improved, the smoothness is ten times what we did with E.T. in '81, but the method is the same. This little sucker is becoming a thorn in our sides."

After a few more tries, Spielberg steps back from the video monitor and addresses the ground with two curt epithets. Eminently approachable and characteristically good-natured, he rarely shows such pique. He has

the operator repeat the take several more times, as Knight peers back at the spitter amidst buckets of fake rain. As he calls for a "new deal", Spielberg simmers quietly, no doubt promising himself a long day in the editing suite with this shot. (Which is precisely what he does, as related in a later phone call: "The success of that scene was created in the editing room using it right to the frame where it was believable. Because it's funny, one extra frame and it goes from real to fake.")

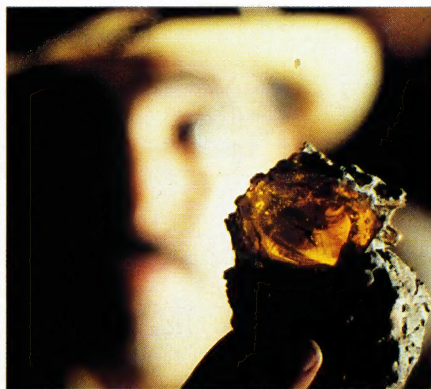
er used – and then some.”

THE SCRIPT THAT SPIELBERG OVERSAW began with a Crichton draft, and he ultimately shared the credit with David Koepp (*Death Becomes Her*). Though much of the work was done in streamlining characters and story line, a key logistical move was to reduce the 15 dinosaur species of Crichton's novel down to six key ones, and concentrate on those. "Our most savage critics will be the kids," Spielberg foresees, "that's going to be the test to see whether the dinosaurs work or not."

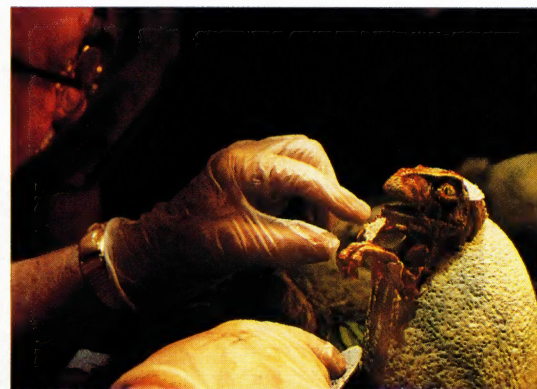
If they've succeeded, much of the credit must go to Kennedy, who began the search for what she dubbed the Dream Team of special effects people to craft the dinos. They knew they needed to go beyond the art pioneer, who did the dinosaur effects for such films as *One Million Years B.C.* "Ray Harryhausen is the genius of 'go-motion' (itself an advance over the earlier solution, stop-motion) and we all take our hats off to him, but it still didn't look like real dinosaurs moving the way people would expect them to move — it was real herky-jerky. Dennis Muren came up with an amazing invention called 'full-motion' dinosaurs (as his credit reads on film); it's the biggest breakthrough I've ever been involved with in film and certainly is going to pave the way for a lot of movies being made in the future, where the characters won't really exist in time and space but will exist on film. It won't be good on Letterman for interviews, but it will look great in movie theatres."

The hair-raising stampede of gallimimuses—that overruns Sam Neill's Grant character as he traverses a field with the film's two child actors was done mostly through Muren's computer graphic images, supplemented by puppets and full-size models. The key to the authenticity of the stampede was the filmmaker's close study of motion in present-day animals (ostriches, in this case) and effects called digital blurring — the latter removing the tell-tale, crisp seams around the moving bodies that used to betray such effects. The herd, thundering towards moviegoers accompanied by frighteningly realistic hoofbeats, is more striking to see than the film's first dino spotting, an idling group of stegosauruses who leave the actors pointedly awestruck. When the tyrannosaurus rex comes along, with his baggage of terror from our previous imaginings, what really sells him is the force of the sound effects — his up-close roars, in loudly intimate digital stereo, threaten to perforate one's eardrums.

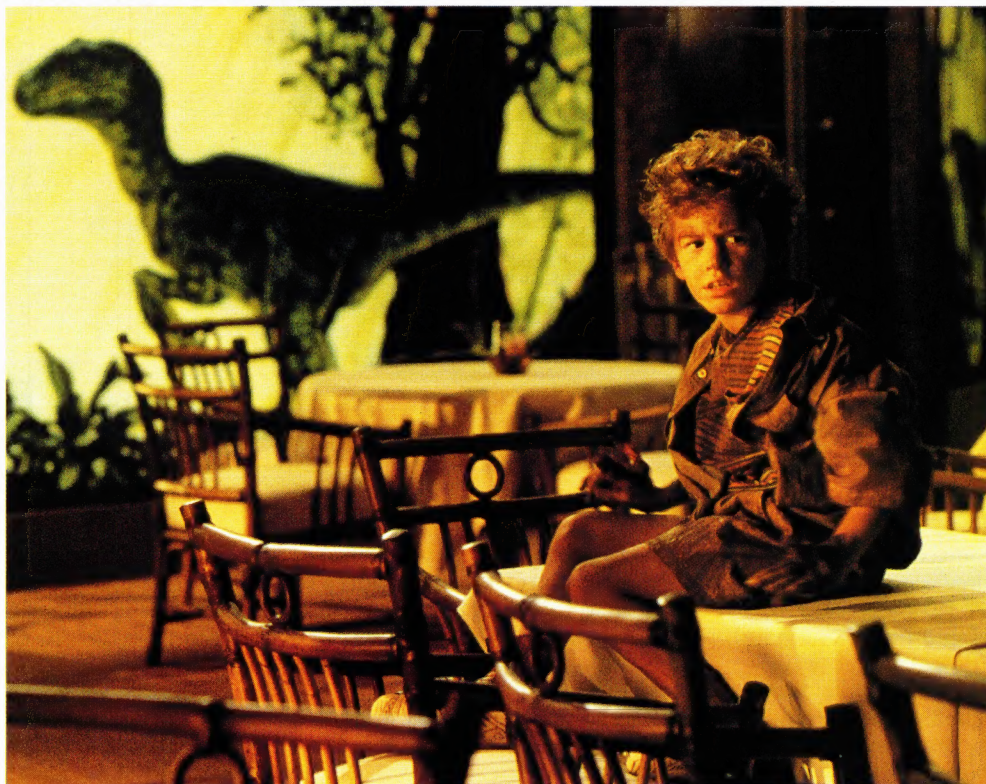
On a second soundstage not far away, Sam Neill and Laura Dern stand waiting to film a promotional spot. They are in the kind of high-gloss, artful disarray only movies can provide, with somehow flattering smudges of mud and soot sp. Their likenesses will be part of a merchandising blitz of the first order



GOING FROM AMBER: THE PRESERVED MOSQUITO BEARING THE FATEFUL DNA . . .



TO GO! IT'S A BOY MRS. 'RAPTOR. THE PREHISTORIC SPROG EMERGES



BEHIND YOU! JOSEPH MAZZELLO TAKES AN UNEASY TEA BREAK AS THE FRIGHTENINGLY REALISTIC 'RAPTOR HOVERS MENACINGLY IN THE BACKGROUND

(albeit taking up the rear after the dinosaurs), part of Universal Studio's exploitation of a film they hope will be a "tent-pole" among their '90s releases. Their parent company MCA has similar hopes, with plans to furnish their Florida and California theme parks with *Jurassic*-derived attractions, creating a *Jaws*-style franchise. Moving one more step up the organisational ladder, Japanese multinational Matsushita, MCA's owner, is said to be growingly nervous about their massive investment in film projects.

All the bucks seem to stop at the desk of MCA film chief, Tom Pollack, long rumoured to be on his way out. *Jurassic Park*'s success (something north of the \$120 million that means respectability for a would-be blockbuster) or lack of it (against top summer competitor *The Last Action Hero*) may tell the tale. Spielberg doesn't consider these to be his

worries: "I stay out of that stuff. I don't really care who comes in first, second, third. I've had my share of firsts, number one films of the year, and I'm a little humbled by my success as opposed to hungry for more of that. If it happens, great, if it doesn't, great."

Spielberg is aware of the irony of a film about exploitative theme park mania fuelling MCA's real-life theme park mania. One of his models for Richard Attenborough's portrayal of the film's leisure magnate John Hammond is (along with Ross Perot) entertainment impresario, Walt Disney. The grandfatherly Hammond has motives beyond delighting the public: "One, certainly, is to make as much money as he can so he can pay himself back for the 5 billion dollars of his own money he spent on the park. In a way, *Jurassic Park* tells the story of any studio head, having a bad year, who needs a hit. I mean,



TELL ME WHERE IT HURTS: LAURA DERN AND SAM NEILL TEND TO AN OFF-COLOUR TRICERATOPS

Universal's not had a great couple of years and they're counting on this film. I've always sort of jokingly said to the guys that John Hammond is as anxious for *Jurassic Park* to work as you guys are."

The studio held considerable leverage over Spielberg, however. The film that's "got me by my passion" is *Schindler's List*, Spielberg's biopic of the wartime entrepreneur who smuggled Jews from under the noses of the Nazis, shot from late winter to spring on location in Poland. "Universal said, 'we're not going to give you the money to make *Schindler's List* until we see *Jurassic Park* playing in theatres, 'cause we want to ensure you'll follow it through right to the last frame of colour correction.' Even though I assured them I could do that, they didn't believe me. So I got George Lucas to kind of front for me – he promised that when I wasn't around, he would look in on my movie, thereby making Universal relax a little bit." As it turned out, Lucas had minimal post-production chores, as Spielberg raced from Poland to Paris several times to work in a lab, finishing his work on the film via satellite transmissions (scrambled for secrecy) beamed from Industrial Light & Magic's facilities in San Francisco to Poland. Long-time Spielberg collaborator John Williams composed a score "without a lot of discussion. He understood the movie

and what kind of score it needed, and gave the dinosaurs a very lovely and noble theme. He was great with action music; the only thing we agreed to stay away from was any of the *Jaws* 'dum-dum-dum'".

SPIELBERG TALKS OF THE DINOSAURS with real affection, and of the actors merely with respect. As the insinuating predictor of doom by chaos theory, Jeff Goldblum was "perfectly typecast". Laura Dern was "an honest and naturalistic actress who couldn't make a false move", and he hopes Sam Neill, who fought for more dimension to his character, "will emerge as a bit of a matinee hero". Attenborough, clearly a Spielberg hero, plays Hammond with "a twinkle of mischief in his eye". As disaster unfolds, Attenborough's Hammond eats melting ice-cream (and a few dollops of scenery) as he reminisces about his start in the business with a flea circus.

As the rain is shut down, Spielberg muses on the building of his movie, as the audience will see it. "You've got about 40 minutes to sit on your ass and learn about science and bio-chemistry, and you've got to be very patient – just sit back and let us teach you a little bit about DNA cloning and genetic engineering and how these parks are run.

Then, all of a sudden, something happens and a momentum takes over – you're back on a roller coaster."

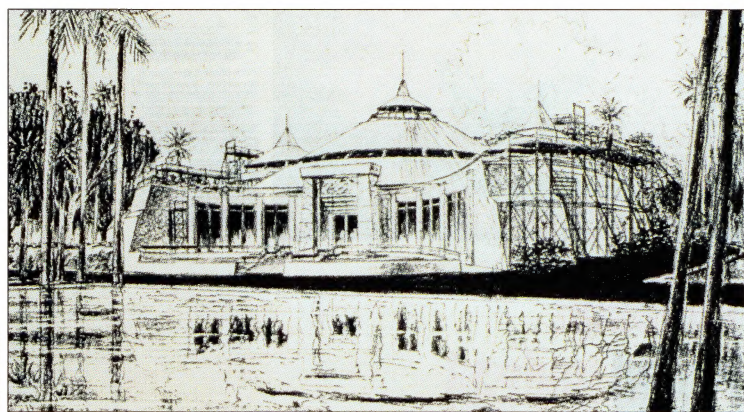
Spielberg shrugs as the last two words, with their theme park association, hang in the air. The studio honchos have to take their chances on his good judgement – he didn't test-market *Jurassic*. Preview audiences "would probably have said, 'Yeah, he could have trimmed the first hour to get the chase faster.' They might have told me where things are too scary. But I wouldn't have made these changes; I wanted the film to be scary when the T. rex and the 'raptors are on the hunt, because that's what we're making here. This isn't a movie about a petting zoo behind chicken wire. These dinosaurs are contained behind 22 feet of high voltage electric fencing". Spielberg catches the earnestness in his own tone, and remarks on the amount of fresh palaeontology studies (notably, a 'raptor bones find) that backed up his production's assumptions, even as the film was shot. "It was very reaffirming to know it wasn't all science fiction, but based on science as well – a sort of speculation of science, which is also what I based *Close Encounters* on. I never considered either picture sci-fi, although anybody in their right minds will. But I don't have to be in my right mind, because I'm the director of the movie."



JUNGLE FEVER

Turning 'Jurassic Park' into a cinematic fantasy world was a task of Spielbergian proportions

THERE IS AN AURA OF INEVITABILITY, OF RIGHTNESS, about the idea for *Jurassic Park*. It pulls together bits and pieces of social detritus—the DNA research breakthroughs screaming daily from the headlines, the dinosaur mania that has become a permanent fixture of the kiddie culture, the theme park visits that are now essential to every family vacation—elements that were just begging to be reconfigured into a best-seller and then a blockbuster movie. And who better to write the



MCDONALD'S (NOT!): The enterprising purveyor of the Egg McMuffin was eager to have the famous golden arch span the visitors' center, but the filmmakers decided that the only fast food in the park would be people.



ANOTHER SENSELESS CARJACKING: *Tyrannosaurus rex*, here shown in a drawing by John Bell. Only the top half of the dinosaur was actually built—models were used for the details; computer animation supplied the entire beast.

novel than Michael Crichton, past master of high-concept fiction. Indeed, Crichton turned out a thing of beauty, an impeccably machined thriller that ticks along with all the precision of a finely engineered Swiss watch. And who better to make the movie, create the event, launch the phenomenon, and then recycle it into toys and theme park rides and T-shirts and coffee mugs than Steven Spielberg, working at Universal Pictures—the team, in other words, that gave us *Jaws* and started the ball rolling in the first place.

Inevitable though this picture may have been, however, it took the superhuman efforts of an army of creative talents to trans-



BONES ALONE: Artist's vision of the interior of the visitors' center, loosely based on the Dome of the Rock.

form Crichton's words into images that would convince hordes of hard-to-please moviegoers raised on dinosaur toys and old monster movies that the theme park of the title, populated by genetically engineered

BY PETER BISKIND



**Production designer
Rick Carter.**

IT WAS LIKE A GIANT SHARK UP ON LEGS," SAYS RICK CARTER OF THE *TYRANNOSAURUS REX* IN *JURASSIC PARK*.

"AND PERFECTLY DESIGNED TO BE AS THREATENING AS YOU COULD EVER IMAGINE."

prehistoric beasts, might actually exist. Prominent on the team was production designer Rick Carter, whose job it was to create the leafy world in which the humongous reptiles eventually run amok.

Carter's credits have made him something of a specialist in fantastic worlds that are nevertheless rooted in reality. He was the art director for *The Goonies* and production designer for the TV anthology series *Amazing Stories*, the *Back to the Future* sequels, and *Death Becomes Her*. Still, *Jurassic Park* was a challenge.

Carter's involvement started at the very beginning, in June 1990, way before there was a script, when he, Spielberg, and art director John Bell sat down with the book to noodle around with ideas and draw storyboards in an effort to figure out if the movie was doable at a reasonable price. "It took a lot of people," recalls Carter. "Steven would start doing his little drawings and John would do drawings and I would do sketches. Sometimes we would get into a dead end. Then someone would get an idea of how to get out of it. It's very collaborative, even though there's no question that the main guy who's telling the story is Steven. He's very open to other people's input.

"First, there was really nothing but a blank canvas," Carter continues. "When the visuals started to come, people felt like, 'Oh, this is a movie.' But we always had to remember—it's the storytelling. We didn't want to overdose on dinosaurs, to do a movie that just ate money. We spent a long time storyboarding, coming up with ideas for sequences—especially the whole third act—and then deciding, 'Well, if you lose this dinosaur, you save \$250,000, and if you combine this scene with this one, you save \$500,000. Because at first, there was a \$90 million budget.'"

Although the filmmakers didn't know it, computer programs that were needed to animate the dinosaurs didn't exist when they started. Industrial Light & Magic's Dennis Muren, who had done *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, would tell them, "I don't know if we can do it in the rain. I don't know if you can do close-ups." But in the year it took Stan Winston to build dinosaur models, the computer programming had progressed to the point where most of the effects could be achieved.

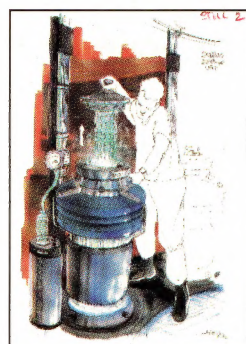
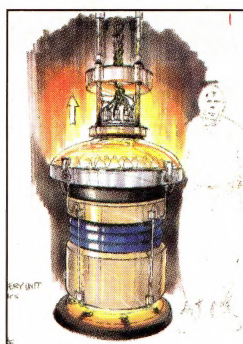
For the exteriors, Spielberg and Carter chose the largely untouched Hawaiian island of Kauai, whose spectacular waterfalls, dramatic escarpments, and lush, primitive jungles approximated the island off the west coast of Costa Rica where the park is sited in the book (it even gets hit by hurricanes). Carter says the park is "sort of a generic tropical fantasy made to look like the idea you have in your mind of what Eden might have been like"—nature im-

proved upon, as the romantic poets used to say. "In reality, a place like the Amazon would be a lot scruffier, and I worry about whether our jungle is going to be ultimately artificial," says Carter. "I just have my fingers crossed that it won't."

Since audiences pretty much know that park visitors are going to end up as dino food, one of the challenges was to make the place user-friendly, so it wouldn't seem as if anyone who sets foot on the island is out of his or her mind. Without losing a feeling of mystery and menace, it had to look safe and inviting, even a little Disneyish. The visitors' center is the point of entry into the park. It was designed to resemble a natural history museum, although it has thatched roofs that mesh with the tropical environment. "I was going for a temple effect," says Carter. "The interior is based upon the Dome of the Rock. That's the most profound building I've ever been in, other than the pyramids, but if we did a pyramid, you're making an architectural statement, competing with the magnificence of dinosaurs. I was trying for a serious, not overly somber effect. It's a place that reveres dinosaurs."

Initially, Carter was going to use a lot of matte shots, which would have been the traditional way to construct the extended theme park environment. But he decided against it. "Everybody knows the language of the matte shot," says Carter. "It is always a tip-off that something artificial is happening and that you're being manipulated. The computer is changing the ability to construct whole worlds with creatures and people and objects. There are things here that people won't understand how they were done. They're just not going to get it. Something is going to change as a result of this movie."

One of the passages from the book they started with was the first dinosaur attack on humans, when a *Tyrannosaurus rex* breaks down a fence and tosses a ride vehicle around like a Ping-Pong ball. Great pains were taken in the design of the car, a modified Ford Explorer painted like a brightly colored dinosaur with the park logo on the door. It's fitted with a see-through dome for viewing Michael Jordan-size dinosaurs, a video camera, and an inboard computer with monitors—triggered at each exhibit by motion sensors—that tell you where you are. "It's sort of a commercial icon," says Carter. "I felt okay about it being that broad, because it gets squished." At one time, it also had a bright yellow telephone that was supposed to be used between vehicles, but the filmmakers discarded it because they worried that the audience would expect the passengers to pick it up and call home when the *T. rex* got too perky.



"IT'S A GIRL": Richard Attenborough, Laura Dern, and Sam Neill observe the miracle of birth (top); John Bell's sketch of the hatchery unit (above left) and embryo storage unit (above right).

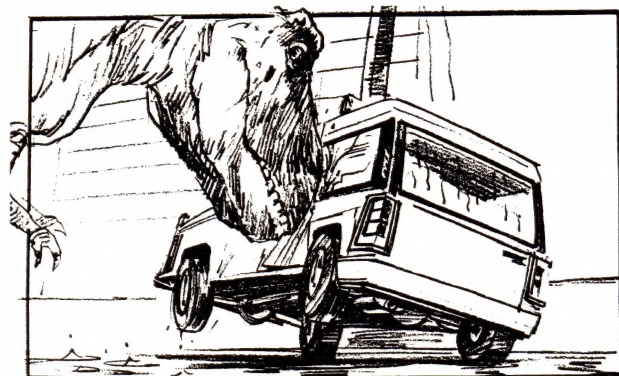
The powerful jaws opened and closed. The tyrannosaur bellowed angrily, and then the big hind leg came up and crashed down on the roof of the car; the claws slid off with a metal screech, barely missing Grant as he stood there, still unmoving.

The foot splashed in the mud. The head ducked down in a slow arc, and the animal inspected the car, snorting. It peered into the front windshield. Then, moving toward the rear, it banged the passenger door shut, and moved right toward Grant as he stood there. Grant was dizzy with fear, his heart pounding inside his chest. With the animal so close, he could smell the rotten flesh in the mouth, the sweetish blood-smell, the sickening stench of the creature's body, awaiting the inevitable.

DETAILS, DETAILS: Spielberg, Carter, and Bell worked from Crichton's novel (above) before the script was ready. Bell's rendition of night vision goggles (below left) and the exterior (below right) and interior (bottom) of the visitors' car.



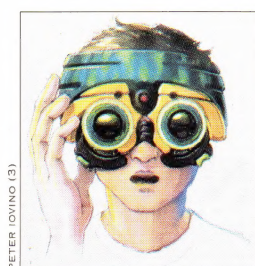
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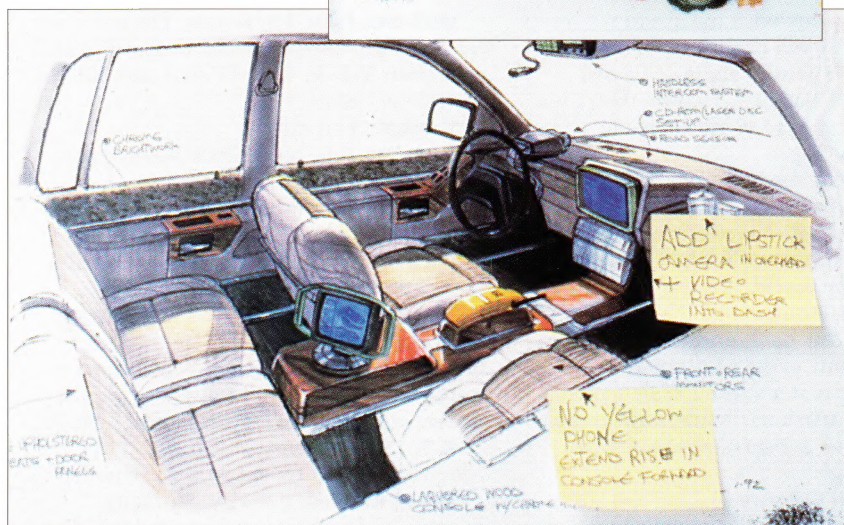
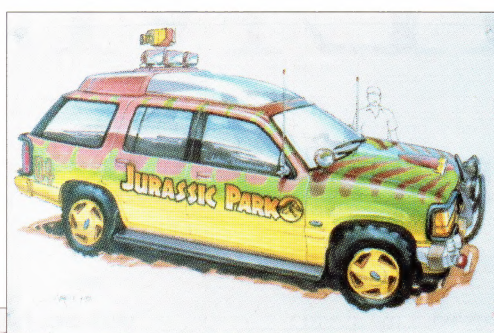
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PETER IOVINO (3)



The scene itself plays like a blur of motion, but in reality, only the top half of the dinosaur was built, and it was set on top of a flight simulator, which was bolted to the soundstage floor. "It was like a giant shark up on legs," says Carter, "and perfectly designed to be as threatening as you could ever imagine." The motion was achieved by moving the sets around the dinosaur, and the live action footage was enhanced by a computer. Anytime the entire dinosaur is visible in the frame, computer animation is responsible.

When all is said and done, *Jurassic Park* is supposed to leave you with a message already familiar from such horror classics as *Frankenstein*: don't mess with God's work. "You're opening a genetic Pandora's box," as Carter puts it. But he worries that he has done his job too well, that "the reality of the park is stronger than the narrative of the film, which tells you it should not exist. I think that people will be left with the idea that if it hadn't been for the guy who sabotages it, we could have had a great island park."

UH-OH: In the two shots above (each paired with a corresponding storyboard), park visitors get more than they bargained for from a nosy *Tyrannosaurus rex*. The top half of a full-scale puppet was built and then mounted on a flight simulator.